



WARTIME REPORT: THE HOME FRONT UNIVERSITY OF HAIFA IMPACT INITIATIVES

War-Related Support Initiatives

Research in Action	4
Support for Soldiers and Reservists	6
Support for Students and University Staff	7
Support for Civilians Affected by the War	8
Remembrance and Commemoration	10
Advocating for Israel's Position Worldwide	12
Public Discourse and Shared Campus Life	14

October 7, 2023, should have been a day of joy. Instead, it became a national tragedy. The Hamas assault launched during Simchat Torah set off a war that continues to echo through every corner of Israeli society; including its universities, where the impact on students and faculty has been both immediate and enduring.

At the University of Haifa, faculty and departments mobilized rapidly to support affected students and staff. The war disrupted campus operations at every level: many members of the university community were called to extended reserve duty, and the institution's proximity to the northern border forced multiple evacuations. The academic year began only in January 2024, and even then, instruction was repeatedly interrupted by missile alerts and Home Front Command directives. The conflict also placed considerable strain on the university's diverse and carefully cultivated multicultural environment.

Despite these challenges, the University of Haifa has remained committed to academic excellence and to foster open, respectful dialogue on campus. As the leading academic institution in northern Israel, it embraced a broader role in regional recovery, launching the "Data Driven. Community Rooted. Home Again" campaign to support the rebuilding of the North through evidence-based programs, leveraging its academic and community strengths to promote recovery and growth.

This booklet offers a reflection on selected university initiatives undertaken during these challenging times. The initiatives discussed here span the period from October 2023 to April 2025. We chose this moment to pause and reflect on what has been accomplished so far.

In 2025, the University expanded this effort by launching the *Home Again campaign*, a \$60 million initiative designed to restore and strengthen the North through targeted, measurable action. The campaign advances a coordinated, data-informed strategy built around three core pillars: emotional and physical rehabilitation, economic stabilization, and long-term community investment.

As the leading academic institution deeply embedded in the region's cities, towns, and social fabric, the University of Haifa holds a distinctive position in this work. Our 18,000 students come from across the North. Our faculty conduct research in partnership with local hospitals, schools, and municipalities. Our graduates become teachers, social workers, and healthcare professionals who serve the region. This deep integration means our recovery efforts are designed by and for the people who call the North home.

Home Again is more than a campaign; it is a collective commitment to rebuilding and renewal. Its success begins with the university's extended community, its mishpacha, whose support and generosity form the foundation of the institution's resilience and its vision for the future.

The university's Home Again campaign continues its mission to rebuild and revive northern communities.



RESEARCH IN ACTION

Following the October 7 terror attacks on the Gaza Envelope and the ensuing war, the University of Haifa has been deeply engaged in addressing the psychological and social impact of these traumatic events. Many victims and their families required professional mental health support, and in response, faculty members, research centers, and clinical units across the University mobilized to offer therapy, guidance, and a wide range of initiatives aimed at supporting affected communities, advancing applied research, and sharing professional expertise.

University of Haifa's expert features and media outreach provided parents and the public with guidance on supporting children, coping with anxiety, and maintaining resilience during wartime. Academic units organized large-scale professional seminars on trauma care for reservists, highlighting the importance of group-based interventions and the integration of cognitive and emotional resources for long-term recovery.

The University's faculties developed digital platforms with lectures, articles, and practical tools to strengthen resilience. Specialized courses and training programs prepared graduate students and practitioners to provide psychological first aid to evacuees and war-affected families, combining theoretical instruction with hands-on fieldwork.

University researchers have led pioneering studies on topics ranging from sexual behavior during wartime, to the psychological effects of psychedelic substances during traumatic events, to disparities in access to mental health care. Other projects have examined PTSD symptoms among partners of reservists, acute stress responses in the broader population, and generational differences in post-traumatic reactions.

Clinical services have expanded significantly. The University's psychotherapy and clinical training centers provide targeted trauma therapy, delivered by graduate students under professional supervision. New trauma-informed care models, developed in collaboration with national health partners, are now being adopted in hospitals and clinics across Israel.

In partnership with community organizations and government agencies, the University has produced practical resources such as emergency response guides for neighborhood teams and resilience-building materials for educators. Faculty and students have also been active in direct field support—offering therapeutic interventions for evacuees, freed hostages, and other individuals affected by the war.

Through these efforts, the University of Haifa has demonstrated its dual role as a center of academic excellence and a vital community resource—advancing knowledge, providing care, and helping society navigate the enduring challenges of crisis and recovery.



SUPPORT FOR SOLDIERS AND RESERVISTS

The war has taken a profound toll on Israeli soldiers, and the University of Haifa has sought to ease their burden through targeted support initiatives. Early in the conflict, the University, working with *Friends of University of Haifa association* and international supporters, provided essential protective and medical equipment to IDF medical units in the Southern Command.

The University’s student dormitories hosted reserve units stationed in the north, offering not only accommodation but a welcoming environment. Campus and community partners organized gatherings, cultural events, sports activities, and shared meals, creating a sense of warmth and appreciation for the soldiers.

In addition, the University has developed programs to address the emotional challenges faced by returning soldiers. Workshops led by creative arts therapists have helped service members process their combat experiences, while the Faculty of Law’s Dispute Resolution Clinic offers reservists free mediation services to support personal and family relationships during the transition back to civilian life.



Photo: University of Haifa

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY STAFF

The current war has affected everyone in Israel, but our students—many of whom serve as reservists—have been especially impacted. Below are a few initiatives the University has undertaken to offer support and assistance during this challenging time.

As part of its commitment to supporting IDF soldiers and reservists, the University of Haifa awarded tuition scholarships to students called up under emergency orders, helping to ease the financial strain of prolonged service. It also introduced a pioneering admissions track—open to reservists, soldiers, security personnel, and evacuees—that allows entry based solely on high school matriculation scores, bypassing the national psychometric exam for a limited portion of each department’s intake.

The University’s support extends well beyond financial assistance. Funds from the Emergency Relief Fund have strengthened campus mental health services, ensuring that students returning from reserve duty have access to timely, professional care. The Clinical Counseling Unit has launched a dedicated support group for returning students, providing a flexible, free-of-charge space to ease the transition back to academic life.

Faculty members also benefit from enhanced psychological support through the Interdisciplinary Clinical Center, which, in collaboration with the Human Resources Division, offers subsidized therapy packages to help address emotional and mental health needs during these challenging times.



Photo: University of Haifa

SUPPORT FOR CIVILIANS AFFECTED BY THE WAR

The war has deeply affected communities across Israel—from residents along the borders to families of reservists and those facing economic hardship. In response, the University of Haifa mobilized its community to provide practical, emotional, and legal support through a wide range of initiatives.

Staff contributions raised over NIS 130,000 to aid community rehabilitation in the south, including the rebuilding of educational and cultural infrastructure. The University opened its dormitories to evacuees from northern and southern regions, while volunteer efforts organized by the Human Resources Division provided food, supplies, and assistance to displaced families and local farmers.

Cultural and educational programs were expanded to serve affected communities. The Hecht Museum offered free online workshops for families; the Nazarian Library hosted creative activities and film screenings; and the Youth Academy for Environmental, Cultural, and Scientific Enrichment ran workshops for teens on topics from robotics to regional history.

The Interdisciplinary Clinical Center launched free support groups for bereaved parents and grandparents, and a national emotional support hotline staffed by mental health professionals. New family resilience programs and therapeutic resources were developed, including play-based interventions for evacuated families and a children's book offering coping strategies during rocket alerts, with proceeds donated to community relief.

The University's legal clinics played a vital role in protecting civilian rights during the crisis. They petitioned the Supreme Court to expand evacuation eligibility for northern communities under fire, provided free legal aid to evacuees, partnered with national organizations to draft legislation capping legal fees for terror victim claims, advocated for easier shelter construction in schools, and worked to secure financial aid for evacuated students excluded under existing laws.

Through these combined efforts—spanning financial assistance, housing, cultural programming, mental health care, and legal advocacy—the University of Haifa demonstrated its capacity to respond swiftly and comprehensively to the needs of a society in crisis.



REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION

Honoring fallen soldiers and remembering the hostages is a central and solemn commitment for the University of Haifa. The University community has actively participated in national and campus-wide initiatives to demand the return of the captives and to commemorate those lost.

In November 2023, one month after the October 7 attacks, the University joined a National Day of Mourning by displaying 240 silver tags in solidarity with the hostages, as part of the “United Against Terrorism” campaign. Students, faculty, and staff gathered near the installation for a moment of silence and later formed a human chain representing the number of hostages held at the time.

The University has continued to mark key milestones: participating in national events on the 100th day of captivity, reading aloud the names of the hostages on the first day of the academic year, and holding a memorial ceremony on the first anniversary of the attacks. Cultural initiatives have included a moving “Prayer Concert,” performed in an empty hall with photographs of the hostages placed on every seat, as well as symbolic gestures such as naming marine animals after individuals who have been freed from captivity.

Art and storytelling have played a key role in remembrance. The “Faces and Words” project on International Women’s Day shared stories of women at the University in the context of the war. The Eshkol Tower has been illuminated with the hostage symbol as a public call for their release.

The University has also honored the memory of students lost in the attacks. In the final exhibition of the Department of Design and Visual Communication, classmates of a murdered student, Inbar Hayman (Pink) Z”L, created works in her memory, including an illustrated book and an animated short film capturing friendship, grief, and the enduring impact of loss.



ADVOCATING FOR ISRAEL'S POSITION WORLDWIDE

In the wake of the October 7 Hamas massacre, the University of Haifa launched a series of advocacy initiatives to counter disinformation and delegitimization. Faculty and students produced multilingual videos for the University's YouTube channel, presenting factual accounts, correcting false claims, and challenging efforts to deny or distort the atrocities. These efforts aim to confront the global trend of dehumanizing both Israel and the Jewish people.

University leadership engaged in international advocacy and fundraising, visiting universities in the UK and US, meeting with students and academic leaders, and speaking to major media outlets. On campus, the International School hosted a meeting between students and survivors of the Nova music festival, sharing firsthand testimonies of the attack.

The School of Public Health welcomed a delegation from the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER), which came to Israel to express solidarity, promote peace, and discuss the war's impact on public health. The University also hosted leading scientists from around the world, underscoring its commitment to continuing academic work despite the ongoing conflict.

University researchers have carried Israel's voice to the global stage, from Antarctica—where marine scientists participated in the Homeward Bound program and raised the Israeli flag—to South America, where faculty joined hostage families on a diplomatic mission to meet national leaders.

The University's Legal Aid Clinic for Wartime Support contributed to the "Project Re'ha'ya (evidence)" initiative, taking part in a United Nations visit to raise international awareness of the sexual crimes committed during the October 7 attacks. The delegation presented professional findings to help prevent evidentiary challenges in prosecuting such crimes and emphasized the need for a coordinated global effort to combat sexual violence and terrorism.



PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND SHARED CAMPUS LIFE



The University of Haifa is home to a diverse academic community committed to social solidarity, mutual respect, and equality. At the start of the academic year, the University launched the “Continuing to Learn Together” video series, featuring leadership and faculty voices affirming that the campus remains a shared home for all students.

To strengthen this vision, the Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Division, together with the Jewish-Arab Center, held a “Diverse Campus” Mini-Hackathon. Jewish and Arab faculty and staff collaborated to develop initiatives celebrating the University’s diversity and fostering shared living. The “Shared Living Ambassadors” project was also introduced, with academic staff and students distributing bracelets bearing the slogan during class breaks to promote a sense of safety, belonging, and mutual respect.

The Jewish-Arab Center hosted a dialogue between senior Israeli police officials and leading Arab public figures on urgent social issues, reflecting the University’s role as a space for constructive engagement.

Amid these efforts, the Interdisciplinary Clinical Center launched the Unit for the Science of Happiness with a symposium on “Happiness Amid the Reality of War,” exploring resilience and well-being during challenging times.





WARTIME REPORT: THE HOME FRONT | University of Haifa Impact Initiatives

Division of Innovation & Sustainability and the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Library

The University of Haifa, Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905, Israel



© March 2025 | Graphic Design:  Marina Bugaev

Cover Photo: An olive tree overlooking Haifa Bay, Mount Carmel campus, University of Haifa
(Credit: Roy Hermoni)

המערך לחדשנות וקיימות
Division of Innovation and Sustainability
אוניברסיטת חיפה



ספריית יונס וסוראיה נזריאן
Younes & Soraya Nazarian Library
مكتبة يونس وثرى نازريان
אוניברסיטת חיפה

